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OUR DEFECTIVE MILITARY SYSTEM

BY MAJOR GENERAL WILLIAM HARDING CARTER, RETIRED

THIS nation may not be justly charged with parsimony in its provisions for the existing military establishment and for the pensions and claims of past wars, but we have never evolved any system capable of quick expansion to meet the first emergencies of a great war. The appropriations for the current year, ending June 30, 1917, make those of twenty-five years ago seem like kindergarten work, but we had not then spread our wings as a so-called world Power. A recent report of the Secretary of War shows that there have been appropriated for the period July 1, 1916 to June 30, 1917:

Support of the army, including pay of Reserve Corps and National Guard.....	\$232,586,080.10
Military Academy	1,225,043.57
Militia	200,000.00
National Guard	30,685,450.00
Civilian military training	2,330,000.00
Fortifications	26,947,550.00
Arsenals	5,214,395.00
Military posts and miscellaneous.....	3,727,859.99
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Total military establishment.....	\$302,916,378.66
Civil establishment	
The War Department, including salaries, contingent expenses, national cemeteries, homes for disabled volunteers, etc., exclusive of river and harbor works	9,689,561.61
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Grand Total	\$312,605,940.27

If we are to have a military force sufficient for war purposes, organized and administered on correct principles and subject only to Federal authority, it will be necessary to repeal much of existing legislation and to reform in the most radical manner our centralized system of army administration. The

regular army is incapable of being expanded into a great war army. As now organized it is useful to meet the demands of small expeditions and to maintain correct models for the organization and training of citizen armies. Such armies as those now engaged in the struggle in Europe can only be created and maintained under a system of compulsory military service. This involves universal training in peace of such character and dimensions as will make available, instantly, the entire manhood of the nation of military age for service in the ranks, the munition factories, the ship yards, the transportation lines and agriculture, scientifically directed by government agencies. The complications involved in the training required to meet these war obligations have not been seriously considered by many of those who are urging action on the primary question of universal military training.

In some States there is a wide dispersal of population and a minimum of concentration in municipalities. Selecting examples at random, Rhode Island has 464,713 of its population in municipalities and 77,897 outside of municipalities, while Vermont has only 61,544 in municipalities and 294,412 outside of municipalities. Arkansas has 119,362 in municipalities and 1,455,087 outside of municipalities. Texas has 684,684 in municipalities and 3,211,858 outside of municipalities.

It should be obvious that so large a territory as the United States, with a comparatively sparse population, requires different treatment from that which prevails in European countries of great and uniform density of population. Economy demands that whatever system of military training may be established shall be made available without unnecessary cost for transportation to and from home of those summoned annually for instruction. The more sparsely settled the district the less can the able bodied men be spared and the greater the difficulties of assembling them.

There is a very serious side to universal military training when applied in the Southern States. Our Anglo-Saxon civilization is too precious an inheritance to be jeopardized by hastily considered schemes for producing a nation in arms. The critical nature of the situation is disclosed by the relative proportions of whites and negroes. The census estimate for 1916 shows the white population of Alabama to be 1,371,973 and the colored 960,635. Louisiana has a white

population of 1,074,038 and colored 755,092. Mississippi has a white population of 877,215 and colored 1,074,459. South Carolina has a white population of 755,456 and colored 870,019. Florida has a white population of 535,612 and colored 357,881. Georgia has a white population of 1,589,295 and colored 1,266,770.

Whether compulsory military training in peace and service in war shall be established by State laws or by acts of Congress, the serious questions arising from such conditions should be faced and settled frankly. The problems of fifty years ago, arising from haste, radicalism and the political animosities engendered by the serious issues of that period, were thrust upon the Southern people at a time when they were about to begin rebuilding of States from the ashes of defeat. The negroes, just emerging from slavery and wholly unqualified to exercise authority and administer affairs of state, were rapidly mortgaging the future of former great commonwealths. Something had to be done for the sake of future generations of descendants of those English, Scotch, Irish, French and German immigrants who had been the pioneers of the South. To prevent their being submerged politically and ruined financially it was necessary for the white population to band together and act without the pale of the law. Then followed a course of State legislation, which, right or wrong, has saved the Southern commonwealths during half a century from the ignorance and lack of political morality of recently liberated slaves.

Legislation for compulsory military training in peace and service in war, without special treatment of the festering sore in the South, will produce inevitable race conflict. It may be accepted as certain that universal training of the overwhelming masses of negroes in some Southern districts will set in motion the very natural and justifiable thought, that, if the negro is to be called upon to fight for the country—his country—along with millions whose ancestors arrived in America two hundred and more years after the forebears of the present generation of negroes, he is entitled to a voice in the affairs of the nation. In the final analysis the question of war or peace is determined under the Constitution by Congress, elected by the people, and, if deprived of suffrage, the negro may be called upon to fight the battles of the dominant race without the privilege of expressing his view of the righteousness of the conflict. The North is in honor

bound to accept its share of responsibility in the safe and sane adjustment of all questions arising under such conditions.

The most serious questions now before the American public involve the plans for national defense. The so-called National Defense Act approved June 3, 1916, establishes the regular army and the National Guard as the force to meet the requirements of peace and the first emergencies of war. The vital question first to be determined is how much of an army we should have to meet the sudden contingencies of any probable war, and whether the Regular Army and National Guard, as now established, are able to meet the requirements of a first line.

The National Defense Act is a compromise measure throughout. The manner of its preparation is not creditable to our usual business sense. The enactment of the recent legislation was preceded by a series of hearings by the military committees of the Senate and House of Representatives, during which the widest latitude prevailed. Congress had previously created a General Staff for the express purpose of studying the military policies of the nation and formulating plans to meet them. It soon became evident that the National Guard, as represented by its committee in Washington, had no intention of presenting its needs through the Secretary of War, but relied upon its political influence to secure the legislation drawn up by themselves.

The War Department was created solely to look after the national defense, and it is desirable that all legislation concerning the maintenance of armies, to come under control of that department, should meet with the approval of the Secretary of War acting for the President in so far as relates to practicability of execution. The committee representing the National Guard Association in Washington signified their lack of confidence in the War Department and secured the insertion in the bill before Congress of provisions to install National Guard officers in the War Department, and in the General Staff with a view of operating in reality as a co-ordinate military branch and not as a harmonious and subordinate element of the common defense. Fortunately for the nation, and for the patriotic and unselfish element which comprises the rank and file of the National Guard, the unwise provisions were eliminated in the conference between the Senate and House committees.

As finally approved the National Defense Act established the regular army, for the first time in its history, upon a basis of organization adapted to war and makes it a model for the greater volunteer armies upon which we have always relied in war. Hereafter the Regular Army will comprise the coast artillery corps, to man the harbor defenses, including those of Hawaii, the Philippines, Panama and other outlying possessions, and a mobile force of seven infantry and two cavalry divisions. Under existing plans three infantry divisions will constitute the mobile garrisons of the Philippines, Hawaii and Panama, leaving four infantry divisions and two cavalry divisions for service within the continental limits of the United States. All these organizations will have a peace strength of about two-thirds war strength.

As the increase authorized for the Regular Army is to be made in five annual increments, under the provisions of the National Defense Act, the total authorized peace strength will not obtain until 1920. When the reorganization is complete the Regular Army, at peace strength, will comprise 11,327 officers and 208,388 men, including 45,177 non-combatant troops. When raised to war strength there will be 11,942 officers and 287,846 men. Deducting the overseas garrisons this will provide, after 1920, a peace strength within the United States proper, of less than 100,000 fighting men. After the beginning of hostilities the possibility of increasing overseas garrisons to war strength will depend entirely upon the ability of our navy to hold command of the sea. For this reason the overseas garrisons should be maintained always at war strength.

The National Defense Act has several items of entirely new legislation, undertaken with a view of providing for the shortage of officers which always becomes marked as soon as the army takes the field. The Officers' Reserve Corps is intended to provide during peace a reserve of officers available for service in the line and staff of the Regular Army in time of war. To accomplish this the President is authorized to establish and maintain in civil educational institutions Reserve Officers' Training Corps to consist of senior and junior divisions. The senior divisions are to be organized at universities and colleges which require four years of collegiate study for a degree, and in military schools specially designated by the Secretary of War. Junior divisions may be organized at all other public or private educa-

tional institutions. The courses of theoretical and practical military training for the Reserve Officers' Training Corps are to be prescribed by the President. Graduates of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps may be appointed in the Officers' Reserve Corps upon satisfactorily completing the training prescribed. Many colleges and some universities have taken up the scheme and are patriotically endeavoring to make it a success, but the absence from the list of Yale, Harvard and other great institutions of learning which furnished so many valuable officers during the Civil War is marked and most regrettable. The failure of the great universities to take up the work is not to be accepted as showing lack of interest or of patriotism, but must be credited to reluctance to change the collegiate courses which have marked the broad educational highway of those institutions. Any system of procuring officers which fails to enlist the active co-operation of such institutions cannot be accepted as satisfactory and final.

The grafting upon our military system of the Citizens' Training Camps is excusable only as a means of arousing public opinion as to our shortcomings. They are of great value to those who participate in them, but without some form of permanent military organization, or enlistment, they constitute no available military asset and will die a natural death as soon as the enthusiasm incident to the present world war conditions wears away. In urging an appropriation of several million dollars for the current year, the Citizens' Training Camps Association felt justified in assuring the Congress that 30,000 men would attend during 1916 and be prepared to sign any enlistment required to assure of their availability for future service. The results fell far short of promises and when any proper military policy which provides real military assets is adopted the training camps will, and should be abandoned so far as voluntary services are concerned.

The recent mobilization of the National Guard along the Mexican border has attracted attention to the National Defense Act throughout the country, and been the basis of unfair criticism, much of it improperly based on the technical reports of army inspectors. From the first joint camp of Regulars and National Guard in 1902, the improvement and progress of the National Guard has been marked. Failure, except of a few city regiments, to reach an effective strength

has been the main drawback to National Guard efficiency. The organizations are better equipped and trained than ever before, but in recognition of past failures to secure proper strength, the National Defense Act provides compulsory military service for the State forces, in connection with the National Guard reserve and reserve battalions for recruit training. The provision states that: "If for any reason there shall not be enough voluntary enlistments to keep the reserve battalions at the prescribed strength, a sufficient number of the unorganized militia shall be drafted into the service of the United States to maintain each of such battalions at the proper strength. As vacancies occur from death or other causes in any organization in the service of the United States and composed of men taken from the National Guard, men shall be transferred from the reserve battalions to the organizations in the field so that such organizations may be maintained at war strength."

A great many societies have been organized with a view to inaugurating compulsory training, while here we already have the plain statute providing for compulsory military service in war in the National Guard. What then may be inquired is the trouble with the National Guard as a part of the first line?

The National Defense Act requires that in order to participate in the appropriations for its support, organizations of the National Guard shall have an initial strength of two hundred men to each senator and representative in Congress, and be increased fifty per centum each year until a total of not less than eight hundred men to each Senator and Representative has been reached. Under this plan the National Guard should comprise, at the end of five years, 17,000 officers and 440,000 men with the colors, enlisted for six years, three of which are to be spent in the reserve. If all survived there would be eventually 440,000 in reserve making 880,000 active and in reserve. It requires an optimist of supreme type to believe that the National Guard can ever develop, through voluntary enlistment, the strength required. It should be remembered that compulsory service in the National Guard applies only in time of war. Based on past experience it may be definitely asserted that not one-half of the total strength proposed for the National Guard will ever be reached by voluntary enlistments.

The American General Staff has recorded its opinion that

troops should not be considered fit for war service with less than twelve months' intensive training. Other nations generally require two or three years' training with the colors before passing to the reserve. The period of training prescribed for the National Guard comprises fifteen days' field service, including target practice, and forty-eight armory drills of not less than one and one-half hours, which, if fully complied with, would result in seventy-five days of training during the three years' service with the colors. Enlistments are individual, and not by groups as under a policy of conscription. It will be seen, therefore, that National Guard organizations will never have in active service during peace a reasonable proportion of trained men ready for a call.

An analysis of the recent mobilization shows that of those borne on the rolls at the time of the call, 47,657 were lost through various causes during the period of transition into the Federal service. Many of the organizations that reached the border were comprised mainly of men recently joined. Of those borne on the rolls at the time of the call 7,258 failed to respond and 23,721 were rejected for physical disability. Of those who reported or volunteered after the call, 63 per cent or 81,263 men had had less than three months' military training of any kind and of these more than 60,000 had no training at all and 56,813 men had never fired a rifle. These facts are not to be wondered at. The amazing thing has been that in face of local indifference and often ridicule and animosity, so many thousands of young men should take upon their shoulders the military duty of the whole community and devote their time and means to qualifying to render the State some service at the risk of health, business opportunity and of life itself. Just criticism lies not upon the organizations and men in the National Guard but rather on those citizens who have never fired a rifle nor offered their services. These are not the issues that determine military policy but are sidelights which may serve to guide us aright.

If our object is to create a modern military establishment then we should begin all over again. The whole scheme of attempting to create a proper military force by transposing the National Guard back and forth from State to national service, and the reverse, is wrong in principle and defective in practice.

In the employment of the National Guard, as a part

of the first line with the Regular Army, there has arisen a condition which should receive immediate attention whether or not the whole system is revised. In the present mobilization National Guard organizations were permitted in many instances to select officers of the regular army for appointment by Governors of States, to high offices in those organizations. Rank in the National Guard carries the right to command all officers of lower grade when regulars, marines and National Guard serve together. In this way regular officers were jumped over other officers in service with them along the border, without any consideration as to relative efficiency. In no known instance did the National Guard consider the efficiency records at the War Department, but elected officers, generally, who had performed inspection or other duty with their organizations in a satisfactory manner. Such a system is repugnant to any military code. It may be further remarked that the National Defense Act confirms the generals of the National Guard, appointed by Governors of States, often for political reasons, in their seniority over all the tried and experienced colonels of the regular service when operating together. If this is a satisfactory way to obtain generals to command our joint forces of regulars and National Guard in our wars then the Military Academy at West Point, the Post Graduate Service Schools for officers and the Army War College, all maintained at great expense, may as well be abolished.

Criticism, unless constructive, merely serves to confuse. What then are the means of remedying defects in our military system? We have become accustomed to military blunders and have usually contented ourselves with investigating commissions whose reports are seldom read. When the emergency has passed we lapse into a state of indifference, hoping that the same things will not occur again.

For more than a hundred years the Act of 1792 authorized compulsory military service in the militia. The Congress has recently provided it to maintain National Guard organizations at war strength. Nothing short of compulsory service will meet the needs of any great war.

The most practicable method of procedure under our system of government is not through a council of national defense, but by a joint committee of the Senate and House of Representatives. This committee would have no need for the tedious and unprofitable hearings of those who advo-

cate and those who oppose appropriations for military purposes. The majority of the committee would be ordinarily of the same party as the President, and Secretary of War who acts in military matters for him. The Secretary of War has the General Staff and bureau chiefs to study all questions in detail and frame policies. The Administration and the Joint Committee having agreed upon the military policy to be recommended to Congress, it should be left to the General Staff, to work out all details and the results should come to the committee as approved projects. No individual staff or line officer should be heard by the committee as to their branches. All such hearings should be by the Secretary of War who should finally determine debatable questions within the service and harmonize conflicting views not infrequently based on pride in one's bureau or arm of service or desire for power.

The recorded experience of the army recruiting service leaves no room for dreams concerning the average number of recruits obtainable under our voluntary system. If it continues impracticable to maintain existing organizations at the legal strength we do not have to wait for the test to be applied to a much greater number of organizations. Experienced army men have been slowly but surely reaching the conclusion that our overseas garrisons should be maintained under the existing system of volunteer enlistments and that the organizations within the United States may well be divided into two classes, the one with organizations on a basis of readiness for immediate call, and the other to comprise skeleton organizations for use as schools of instruction under a system of universal training of young men for prescribed periods, during their minority, to remain available for active service in war, during a prescribed number of years.

The term "National Guard" should be abolished and that force should revert to the status of State militia, with the distinct understanding that married men could remain in such organizations, which would be used to preserve order, and suppress insurrection during peace, or while the National or Federal army proceeds with its business of making war. The officers and men of the Federal force would be entirely under control of the President. The militia or Home Guards would be reduced in numbers and remain solely under the authority of the Governors of States, except for the

temporary and infrequent employment in the Federal service, contemplated under the provisions of the Constitution.

When the nation is ready to embark upon these new but not wholly untried waters, we should hark back to some of the wise provisions of the old Militia Law of 1792, and create military districts, wherein shall be recorded the names of all young men due for military training or who have completed it and have been passed into the reserve. This suggests a decentralization of the War Department system, and the placing of more authority in the hands of territorial commanders. This is the only reasonable way to create a body of trained citizens immediately available for the defense of their liberties, without the burden of large standing armies. Under our present system the nation is not getting fair value for its enormous expenditures. The total force of Regulars and National Guard provided for will not be sufficient for the first line and nothing short of compulsory service will serve the purpose. Under a system involving compulsory service there would be no class of ex-volunteers, and willingness to vote for pensions would no longer be the key to the suffrages of survivors of our wars.

Whether or not the existing crisis shall involve the nation in the horrors of war, the lesson of our unpreparedness has at last been driven home. We owe it to our intelligence and abiding common sense to take up the matter of the common defense now, and solve it once for all for the nation's sake, without that tender solicitude for special interests so often observed in past legislation. Americans should all stand together now for a National army and cease to give thought to the separate interests involved in a conglomerate army of regulars, National Guard and volunteers.

WILLIAM HARDING CARTER.